



Chief Editor: Elsie Davis

May - June 2015



RD's Corner

Off and running! Those three words describe how the summer is going in the Southeast Region. In May, I traveled

to Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge, where I had the great pleasure of attending the signing of the first local agreement to implement the partnership between the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the Phi Beta Sigma Fraternity, Inc. The partnership was formalized by a Memorandum of Understanding last year between the Service and Phi Beta Sigma, an African-American fraternity that includes among its illustrious members the conservationist, botanist and inventor George Washington Carver.

The intention of the partnership is to encourage urban youth to learn more about conservation, the natural world, and the biological sciences—and maybe even decide to come work for us. What better place to connect with urban youth than the Southeast Louisiana Refuges' Bayou Sauvage, which lies within and on the boundary of New Orleans East. After the signing, Sigma Beta members planted a grove of 20 cypress trees in an area damaged by saltwater intrusion during Hurricane Katrina to symbolize the blossoming partnership. This local agreement is but one example of how we are taking the Director's five-year Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan, stepping it down, and giving it "legs" on the ground.

If you are still wondering what this newly invigorated effort around diversity and inclusion is all about, it is about
continued on next page...

Fisheries reels in support, funding



Allan Brown holds a green sea turtle, photo: Ken Blick, USFWS

By Elsie Davis, External Affairs

With a total FY-15 budget of \$15,610,762, support from TVA and the Corps of Engineers, and a new Assistant Regional Director, Fisheries is regaining its swagger. The new ARD, Allan Brown brings 31 years of Service experience in a variety of Fisheries positions to his leadership role. The future of the Fisheries program is bright.

A graduate of Michigan State University, Allan began his career in 1984, as a temporary, WG-2 employee at Senecaville National Fish Hatchery in Ohio. He mowed the grass, painted buildings, fed fish, and cleaned raceways there until 1987, when Senecaville became a state-owned hatchery. Allan moved to Lamar, Pennsylvania to work at the Northeast Fisheries Center as a WG-4 employee. Later, he was promoted to a GS-7 biotechnician researching data for reports. He also worked as a GS-7 biologist at Jackson National Fish Hatchery in

Wyoming, before becoming the assistant manager of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery in Kentucky.

From 1994 through 2014, Allan served as the manager of Welaka National Fish Hatchery in Florida, while overseeing as project leader the Service's other six warm-water hatcheries: Private John Allen in Mississippi; Edenton in North Carolina; Orangeburg in South Carolina; Bears Bluff in South Carolina; Natchitoches in Louisiana; Warm Springs in Georgia; and Mammoth Springs in Arkansas.

"I really enjoy working in Fisheries," says Allan. "My experience in many different positions allows me to see things from different perspectives and to have compassion for employees. It's essential to earn the trust and respect of peers and colleagues, and I plan to continue old partnerships and establish new ones."

With the FY-2015 budget, Allan plans to continue the traditional programs that Fisheries has with the states. He'll put more funds into the fish hatcheries, habitat restoration, mussel conservation, and control of invasive species. He may backfill some positions at the hatcheries and hire an Invasive Species Coordinator. **(See Fisheries budget, page 15)**

Allan's father was in the Air Force, and his family lived in several places in the U.S. and Europe. Allan attended high school in Naples, Italy, but he spent his boyhood summers freshwater fishing for northern pikes and walleyes with his grandfather in Michigan. He still calls Michigan "home."

Allan and his wife Julia now live in Lawrenceville, Georgia, with their two Labrador Retrievers. They have three grown children, two daughters and a son, and are expecting their first grandchild in the fall. Allan enjoys fishing, boating, golfing, and gardening.

doing the right thing to get us where we want to go. It is the recognition that every person is unique and has a unique contribution to make. It encompasses acceptance and respect for our differences; and moving beyond simple tolerance to embracing and celebrating the rich dimensions within each of us. Diversity and inclusion also are a reality we create when we bring into our workforce and our work lives individuals and groups that represent a broad spectrum of demographic and philosophical differences.

Why do diversity and inclusion matter to us as a region and a Service? It has been said, "We think we see the world as it is, when in fact we see the world the way we are." Those of us who have chosen for our life's work the conservation of fish, wildlife, and plant resources and creating healthy, productive environments for people and wildlife must have a vision that incorporates how others see reality. We must be able to recognize the human dimension in all we do, understand differences in cultural values, and find ways to bridge the divides. What better way to do that than to "bring the outside in." If our own work force has greater representation, it will naturally expand our vision.

But, it also is about basic respect. It is how those already within our ranks experience the work place. It is asking ourselves whether we actively solicit the opinions of those who are different from us and actively listen to what they have to say. It is realizing that we are engaged in lifelong learning, and others have something to teach us. A friend recently shared with me a story about trying to counsel her young-adult granddaughter about how to prepare for an important interview at a major university. As my friend strained her brain to come up with potential interview questions, her granddaughter replied, "No worries. I am participating in an online chat group with people who have recently been through the interview." A millennial teaching a baby-boomer how to get the job done!

In the Southeast Region, we are capitalizing on our talent pool with the creation of our Diversity Change Agents Team (DCAs). Team members are spending 10 percent of every workday helping the RDT and all managers and employees get from "words on paper"

Southeast Region Diversity Change Agent Team Members:

Marilyn Lawal - WSFR, National
Team Liaison and Regional Lead

Jack Arnold
Ecological Services

Ruth Benson
Refuges

Shari Brewer
Diversity and Civil Rights

Durwin Carter
Refuges

Cindy Fury
Migratory Birds

Jennifer Gilchrist
Budget and Finance

Brian Roland
Law Enforcement

Jennifer Strickland
External Affairs

Cindy Williams
Fisheries

to enthusiastic action. I love the DCAs' mantra: "Bring biodiversity beyond the critters and into the workplace." I am asking each employee to know and engage with your DCA representative (click here for a list of team members (Attachment 1, FKI goes here) Web link List of DCA Team Members. Become part of the process because it won't happen without you. Our goal, across our work force, is to move from awareness, understanding, and acceptance of diversity and inclusion to engagement and championing them in every way possible.

What can you do? You can take a read of the Diversity and Inclusion Implementation Plan and its four goals by clicking (Attachment 2, FK2 goes here Web Link Implementation Plan). Find a place where you can contribute, and make your voice heard. Our DCAs have identified two areas for their own focus: (1) Building diversity as a core value; and (2) Maintaining a highly skilled and diverse workforce through talent management. In our pulse-check survey we identified communication as something we want to improve. If you have ideas

about how to move forward on these or other fronts, we want to hear from you. Remember that small actions can make a big difference.

I would also encourage you to make diversity and inclusion fun—celebrate it! The DCAs hosted an amazing Multi-Cultural Day in the Regional Office in April to promote awareness of the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce. It was a rousing success, and the DCAs are making plans to promote a Multi-Cultural Day in the Field. More information and photos from the April event as well as suggestions for celebrations at our field offices will be coming soon. Lastly, we want to hear about other creative ways you are helping us reach our full potential as a diverse and inclusive Region.

- Cindy

Employee of the Month



Recovery Champion Award, photo: USFWS

Aquatic Habitat Restoration Team wins award

The Southeast Region's Aquatic Habitat Restoration Team, a unique cross-program partnership effort, won a Recovery Champion Award this year.

The Aquatic Habitat Restoration Team is similar to other groups created to solve maintenance issues at our refuges and hatcheries, but it uses the diverse skills of our workforce at a substantial cost savings.

This team specializes in heavy equipment operation to facilitate dam removal, road crossing replacement, and stream restoration. From its early beginnings, this team has expanded its efforts across the region working with numerous Partners for Fish and Wildlife and recovery biologists, as well as private landowners, federal and state agencies, and county governments. At times, the team members are asked to assist other region's with aquatic habitat improvement projects.

"In recent years, the Fisheries Program has increased its engagement in aquatic habitat restoration, said Allan Brown, Southeast Assistant Regional Director for Fisheries. This intertwines perfectly with our strengths in Fisheries management and species propagation. Throughout the Southeast, the loss, fragmentation and degradation of aquatic habitat has accelerated the decline of fragile fish, mussel, and other aquatic dependent species. Many more common species also have felt the impacts. Through our aquatic habitat restoration team, we are working with a variety of partners to provide additional tools in the Fisheries toolbox to conserve, protect, and restore aquatic populations."

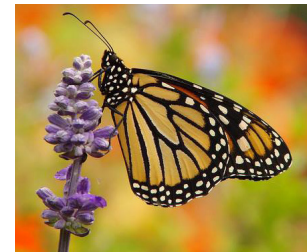
The Southeast Region's Aquatic Habitat Restoration Team started when Private John Allen National Fish Hatchery and North Mississippi National Wildlife Refuge Complex teamed with numerous partners to complete a stream restoration project in Mackeys Creek in Mississippi to benefit the gulf coast strain walleye. The Aquatic Habitat Restoration Team also worked with Raleigh Partners for Fish and Wildlife biologists, private landowners, the city's government, and a non-profit organization in North Carolina to remove four dams in Denson's Creek and Little River. These projects opened 141 miles of river habitat, removed a human safety hazard, improved sediment transport and provided improved recreational access. They were completed at a cost savings of about 60 percent, compared to contracting out these dam removals.

In yet another example of collaboration, The Fisheries Program is currently working with the Charleston, South Carolina Ecological Services Office and other partners to recover the endangered Carolina heelsplitter. Propagation efforts at Orangeburg National Fish Hatchery were successful this past spring. Fish passage funds were applied with U.S. Forest Service funding to replace two culverts in the Stevens Creek watershed in the Long Cane Ranger District that opened more than two miles of designated critical habitat and improved sediment transport. The Southeast Region's Aquatic Habitat Restoration Team has replaced two of three culverts in the Gills Creek watershed. Working with Charleston Ecological Services and Lancaster County, the team replaced undersized culverts with bottomless arch

culverts that accommodate full bank flows. Funding limitations prevented the county from implementing culvert designs that could handle the water volume as culverts continued to fail. Additionally, the culverts were not placed appropriately, which presented a barrier to fish movement and mussel expansion. A partnership between the county and Fisheries Program has been very successful with the replacement of two road crossings just upstream of critical habitat. The Service helped remove a barrier to fish movement and subsequent Carolina heelsplitter expansion and reduced excess sediment introduction associated with frequent road crossing failure. Lancaster County has substantially reduced their long-term maintenance costs by not having to close roads during high rainfall events. The county also won't need to replace road crossings or remove debris from culvert openings. The county has already initiated planning and design efforts for the third road crossing, which is located with critical habitat. ♦

What's Trending

By Katherine Taylor, External Affairs



Monarch butterfly, photo: Christine Lisiewski

Apps: Are you passionate about butterflies? Want an app that serves as an interactive pocket field guide? Be sure to check out Audubon Butterflies.

#MostSharedStory: This month we shared the devastating story of a bald eagle that died of poisoning. It was shared over 8,000 times on Facebook and reached over 800,000 Facebook users.

Social Media: Our Regional Facebook is now at 22,000 followers! If you aren't already follow us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/usfwssoutheast

Culture: We're coordinating with the Midwest Region on a Share Your Monarch campaign. The goal is to get folks from around the country to share their photos of monarchs with us. Want to learn more? Visit: <http://www.fws.gov/midwest/monarch/ShareYourMonarchs.html>

Bragging Rights

Lake Sturgeon lead to a growing partnership

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and our Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery are working with several partners to meet lake sturgeon restoration goals in the upper Tennessee and Coosa rivers.



Moving sturgeon from river bank, photo: USFWS

Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery is working with several partners, including U.S. Geological Survey, Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, Tennessee Natural Resources Agency, Georgia Department of Natural Resources, the Tennessee Aquarium, Tennessee Valley Authority, and Tennessee Technological University.

The Warm Springs National Fish Hatchery has been involved, since 1998, with lake sturgeon production to improve culture techniques, feeding, fish health, habitat assessment, and telemetry studies. Hatchery staff members Carlos Echevarria and Chad Shirey traveled to Shawano, Wisconsin, in April to spawn lake sturgeon in the Wolf River, and transport fertilized eggs back to Warm Springs. They provided assistance to Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources biologists with their annual lake sturgeon sampling and tagging along the river. Bill Wayman, Warm Springs Fish Technology Center Director also traveled with Carlos and Chad to conduct some cryopreservation work and to provide assistance with the frantic spawning culture work. Christina Saidak, a Fish and Wildlife student/employee in the Director's Fellowship Program joined the Warm Springs staff in Wisconsin to assist with spawning operations.

Lake sturgeon broodfish were collected from the Wolf River. Six females were spawned, each with five different males. A total of 179,000 green eggs were collected and transported back to Georgia. A total of 54,000 eggs were provided to Summerville and Go Fish Georgia Department of Natural Resources' hatcheries for restoration of lake sturgeon in the Coosa River, and 125,000 for use at Warm Springs for the upper Tennessee River program.

About a month after the sturgeon eggs hatch and are held in quarantine, the fry will be divided among the partners for continued culturing and will be ready for distribution sometime in October into the Tennessee and Cumberland rivers, and several other tributaries in Tennessee. In 2013, due to the successful reintroduction efforts of lake sturgeon in the Tennessee River, and the cooperative efforts from many different states along the basin, the working group decided to change its name to the Southeast Lake Sturgeon Working Group.

bragging rights continued...

Grassy Flats Estuarine Habitat Restoration Project receives proclamation

By Ken Warren, South Florida Ecological Services

On May 5, I accepted a proclamation on behalf of the Service from the Palm Beach County Commission, which recognized the partnership behind the Grassy Flats Estuarine Habitat Restoration Project –partially funded through the National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grants Program.

Connie Cassler of the South Florida Ecological Services Office and Nicole Adimey of the North Florida Ecological Services Office coordinated the development and submission of the proposal in collaboration with staff from Palm Beach County.

The Grassy Flats project was among 24 announced awards in 2013 that went to the restoration and/or acquisition of critical coastal wetland projects in 13 states and territories to conserve and improve habitat for fish and wildlife. The Grassy Flats project received \$777,142 in funding from the Service.

“They have a track record of doing excellent conservation work in Palm Beach County. Helping establish a conservation partnership with the county and others on such a great project is very satisfying,” said Connie.

“These grants enable us to collaborate with partners and leverage multiple resources to fund projects that may otherwise be on a funding list for years or possibly never get funded,” said Nicole.

Nicole and Connie provided assistance with project development and guidance on the project application to ensure it got the maximum ranking points possible. Nicole also assisted with acquiring letters of support for the project from species leads within the Service, and presented and defended this proposal to the review panel for consideration, highlighting its regional value and overall conservation benefit to the larger landscape and various species.

The Grassy Flats Project:

- Placed sand to cap 13 acres of muck sediments and construct two mangrove islands;
- Created 13 acres of wetland habitat: seagrass, salt marsh, mangrove and tidal flat;
- Placed limestone rock to stabilize the two mangrove islands and provide oyster reef habitat; and
- Will plant 2,900 mangroves and 25,000 plugs of smooth cordgrass (salt marsh).

A community volunteer event is planned for the August/September time frame to plant the cordgrass and mangrove seedlings. It's expected that the two islands –once restored –will provide additional habitat for the over 195 species of fish and 89 species of birds, including nine federally listed species (such as green and loggerhead sea turtles, and Florida manatees) and 16 state listed species (like least terns and piping plovers), found within the Lake Worth Lagoon.

In addition to the Corps and Palm Beach County, the Service's partners on this project included the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission, Florida Department of Environmental Protection, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, West Palm Beach Fishing Club, Marine Industries Association of Palm Beach County, Town of Palm Beach and the Atlantic Coastal Fish Habitat Partnership Program.



Connie Cassler displays the proclamation issued by the Palm Beach County Commission, Photo: Ken Warren, USFWS

The National Coastal Wetlands Conservation Grant Program is administered through the Service's Coastal Program and funded through taxes paid on equipment and fuel purchased by recreational anglers and boaters. Since 1992 Florida has received funding for 37 projects through this program. ♦

Congressman Earl Carter visits Okefenokee NWR



Carter poses with his staff members and refuge staff. From left: Bruce Bazemore, Carter's Savannah Office; Emmitt Nolan, Carter's Brunswick Office; U.S. Representative "Buddy" Carter; Supervisory Refuge Ranger Susan Heisey; Refuge Ranger Sarah Wyatt; and Refuge Manager Michael Lusk, photo: N. McMillan

By Susan Heisey, Okefenokee NWR

U.S. Representative, District 1, Earl L. "Buddy" Carter, attended Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge's Earth Day. A great crowd also attended the event, which included a litter pick-up and educational booths around the Richard S. Bolt Visitor Center and along the Swamp Island Drive.

Project Leader Michael Lusk and Supervisory Refuge Ranger Susan Heisey gave Congressman Carter an extensive tour of the Suwannee Canal Recreation Area, briefed him on the extent of our management activities, and lunched at the Okefenokee Adventures concession. Congressman Carter and two of his staff members spent about two hours at the refuge participating in the event, touring the refuge, and meeting and talking with visitors. Congressman Carter has many ties to South Georgia, and his wife is from Waycross, where the north entrance to the Okefenokee Swamp, Okefenokee Swamp Park (a private, non-profit operation), is located. Although he was quite familiar with the Swamp Park, his visit on Earth Day was his first visit to the refuge.

bragging rights continued...

Black Bayou Lake and Army Corps of Engineers to promote water safety



Bobber the Dog and USFWS' Puddles the Goose teach water safety, photo: Nova Clarke, USFWS

By Nova Clarke, Black Bayou Lake

This spring, Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge embarked on a partnership with the Monroe Field Office of the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps wanted to do more outreach with school children to promote water safety. It is been a great partnership since Black Bayou Lake supports a lot of water activities, and water safety is important here and in Louisiana. The Corps' employees also have helped with our fishing activities.

We host school field trips daily in the spring. The Corps' activities have been popular with students and teachers. During water safety sessions they talk about life jackets, and let the kids practice getting into them. They also conduct a lifejacket drill in a boat safely stationed in the grass. The biggest hit has been Snuffy, a robotic boat with a water gun. The Corps employees assist with our summer camps in June, and we hope that this partnership is an ongoing one. ♦

Pre-schoolers learn about nature, Black Bayou Lake Refuge

By Nova Clarke, Black Bayou Lake NWR

In May, 95 excited three and four year olds from the Reed Street Headstart Center came out to visit Black Bayou Lake National Wildlife Refuge in Monroe, Louisiana. Ninety-five excited children are not anything new out here, since field trips in the spring are an every-day occurrence. What made this one different is these children were part of a program that started in September. Once a month during the school year, the refuge ranger and a volunteer visited the center to do a program with the children teaching them about some aspect of nature related to Black Bayou.

Thanks to a supportive principal and teachers, we were able to do interactive activities and make crafts that the students could take home and share with their families. During one of the first programs, we discussed reptiles and gave the children a chance to touch a snake and an alligator. We've also done programs about pollinators, owls, fish and fishing, mammals, and trees. Another project was establishing a garden at the center that will hopefully provide a tangible link for students about the connection between plants and their lives.

Although the Headstart Center is only about 10 miles from the refuge, many of these children and their families have never been there. The final program for the school year was a field trip to the refuge so the students could see some of the things that they had been learning about all year. We plan on continuing the program in the fall and hopefully expanding it to include other schools.



Reed Street Headstart at Black Bayou Lake's Visitor Center, photo: Nova Clarke, USFWS

bragging rights continued...

Mussel propagation at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery

By Sheila Kirk, Wolf Creek NFH

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery joined efforts to propagate freshwater mussels using suspended cages in a reservoir. In April, glochidia were extracted from the gills of three female Painted Creekshell



Installing suspended cage apparatus for mussel propagation, photo: Moria Painter

mussels. Several Rockbass, the known host fish, were collected from a local stream. The glochidia were pipetted onto the gills of the larger Rockbass, and smaller Rockbass were “batch infested” in buckets by suspending glochidia in water using air stones and allowing the fish to take in the glochidia and water through respiration.

The infested host fish were placed into cages and these cages were then suspended in a protected area of Lake Cumberland in Russell County, Kentucky, at a location near the hatchery. Each cage contains substrate for the juvenile mussels to bury into after transforming and dropping off the host fish. Six weeks after infesting the Rockbass, the host fish will

be released from the cages, and the cages will be re-suspended. In the fall, each cage will be removed from Lake Cumberland and surviving juvenile mussels will be collected and stocked into locations where Painted Creekshell mussels occur.

Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery would like to extend its appreciation to the Kentucky Department of Fish and Wildlife Resources for assistance with mussel and fish collection and to personnel from the Tennessee Cooperative Fishery Research Unit and the Natchitoches National Fish Hatchery for their technical assistance with this project. ♦

American shad trap and transport on the Santee River

By Roman Crumpton, Bears Bluff NFH

Dams represent significant barriers to American shad spawning migrations. As a result, many dams have implemented various methods to pass these fish. The St. Stephen fish lift was built by the Army Corps of Engineers and is run by the South Carolina Department of Natural Resources. While the lift does pass a variety of migratory fish species, American shad are not reaching their historical spawning grounds in great numbers. Thus, Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery entered into an agreement with the Santee River Basin Accord, a consortium of power utilities and government conservation agencies, to trap and transport at least 3,000 adult American shad from the St. Stephen fish lift to the Wateree River below Lake Wateree. By transferring these fish, American shad should begin to re-establish spawning grounds closer to the areas they historically utilized.

Service employees acquire shad by electrofishing and collections directly from the fish lift. The fish are transported 100 miles north of the St. Stephen Dam



Capturing an American shad, photo: USFWS

where genetic samples are taken from every fish before they are released into the Wateree River. State biologists subsequently sample the lower river systems for out-migrating juveniles. The relationship of these juveniles to the transported adults can be determined through genetic analysis. If offspring of the transported fish are found in these samples, it would indicate successful spawning of transported fish.

Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery in Wadmalaw Island, South Carolina, is entering its second year of this project. Last year 3,020 fish were successfully transported. Although the genetics have not been completed from last year, reports indicated that transported fish were showing up in sampling efforts being conducted in the release area.

Leadership Quote:

For everything you have missed you have gained something else; and for everything you gain, you lose something.
— Ralph Waldo Emerson

bragging rights continued...

Earth Day at Fort Polk

By Ray Geroso, Louisiana Ecological Services Office

As part of our April Earth Day celebration, the conservation branch of the Louisiana Ecological Services Office hosted a catfish derby at Fort Polk where anglers aged 16 and under showed off



Young child sees Luigi, photo: USFWS

their fishing skills. During the event, biologists provided activities promoting Earth Day awareness; educating and instructing the public about our work at Fort Polk for the Louisiana pine snake and the red-cockaded woodpecker. The rare Louisiana pine snake is secretive in nature, and encounters in the wild are uncommon. This gives us the opportunity to show off “Luigi,” our captive-bred Louisiana pine snake. From our experience, live snakes have always been popular among children. Luigi did not disappoint! Kids who became aware of our display came in droves and asked about the different species of snakes that occur in Louisiana. Biologists were more than happy to educate them about the importance of venomous and non-venomous snakes. This event would not have been possible without the efforts of biologists from Colorado State University, the Department of Defense, and Illinois University. ❖

Christmas trees provide wetland habitat at Bayou Sauvage

By Shelley Stiaes, Bayou Sauvage NWR

On April 2, 2015, more than 9,000 Christmas trees collected in New Orleans after the holidays were airlifted into Bayou Sauvage National Wildlife Refuge as part of the annual Christmas Restoration Program. This project helps to create new wetland habitat for thousands of migratory waterfowl and wildlife that call that area home.

The freshwater marsh units of the refuge are contained within hurricane and flood-protection levees. What was once historically a wetland system that could benefit from natural sediment deposits was altered. The levees that surround much of the refuge today changed the natural ecosystem. Through this innovative project, new marsh can be created in these areas. The refuge is one of the largest urban refuges in the country, and for migratory birds marks one of the last resting areas before hitting open water.

The trees establish a breakwater in open ponds on the refuge. Like a rock jetty but made out of repurposed Christmas trees, the 600-foot line slows water movement and traps sediment, encouraging the growth of marsh grasses. The bundles of trees are airlifted with the assistance of two Black Hawk helicopters. The tree bundles are dropped in marked lines in the marsh unit. The transport slings that are used to move the trees are retrieved by airboat.



A Louisiana National Guard UH-60 Black Hawk helicopter from the 1st Assault Helicopter Battalion, 244th Aviation Regiment lowers a bundle of recycled Christmas trees into Bayou Sauvage, photo: Master Sgt. Toby M. Valadie, Louisiana National Guard

The annual project is made possible through a 20-year partnership with the New Orleans Mayor’s Office of Environmental Affairs, New Orleans Department of Sanitation, and the Louisiana Air Army National Guard, which uses this opportunity as valuable training exercise for the pilots and ground crews. The bundles of trees are dropped into the impounded units selected by the refuge manager and the biologist.

Friends and Volunteers

Wolf Creek Fishing Derby: More than 3,000 visitors enjoy Catch a Rainbow Kids Fishing Derby

By Byron Scruggs, Wolf Creek

The 29th Annual Catch a Rainbow Kids Fishing Derby took place on Saturday June 6, 2015, at Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery. The warm weather, a cool stream, and a creek full of rainbow trout brought more than 1,300 participants aged from one to fifteen years. This annual event coincides with National Fishing & Boating Week and free fishing weekend in Kentucky.

Prior to the first group of eager young anglers casting their lines into Hatchery Creek, 3,700 rainbow trout, ranging from 12-14-inches, and ten 5-12-pound trout were released. The largest fish of the day, weighing in at a whopping 12 pounds, was caught by 12-year-old Shyann from Somerset, Kentucky. Although not everyone caught a trophy fish, they took home lasting memories, a free t-shirt, a new item to add to their outdoor gear collection, and full bellies of cotton candy, popcorn, and hot dogs.



Hatchery creek with thousands of eager fishermen, photo: Byron Scruggs.

The event is organized by the hatchery and Friends of Wolf Creek National Fish Hatchery, Inc. The annual derby was made possible through the generous support and contributions of many local, regional, and national sponsors and businesses. The event included the

participation of 100 volunteers, making it a true example of community partnering. Through such teamwork, an event with a value of \$21,017 occurred with little or no cost to any organization. ❖

Kid's Fishing Rodeo at Panther Swamp

By Dove Barnes, Theodore Roosevelt NWR Complex

Thanks to the support of local volunteers, individuals and businesses, the third annual Kid's Fishing Rodeo at Panther Swamp National Wildlife Refuge was a tremendous success! On May 15, three hundred and fifty children and their families were able to spend a day outside fishing and participating in BB Gun and Bow Shoot activities. Fish were caught as soon as the hooks hit the water. A picnic lunch was provided to everyone. Each child was then presented a goodie-bag and a fishing rod or a tackle box in hopes of encouraging them to get outside.



Caught a fish, photo: USFWS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

friends and volunteers continued...

Community leaders visit Clarks River

By Stacey Hayden, Clarks River NWR

Community leaders or their representatives visited Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge on Friday, May 1, for a field day hosted by the refuge staff and The Friends of Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge. Offices represented at the event were U.S. Senator's Mitch McConnell and Rand Paul, the office of Governor Steve Beshear, Marshall County Judge Executive's office, and the Benton Mayor's office.

Guests were given a behind the scenes look at Kentucky's only National Wildlife Refuge. The focus was on the refuge as a community asset from the perspective of conservation, education, economic and recreation to the State of Kentucky and surrounding communities. Later, 10 members of the community conveyed their personal and professional experience with the refuge. This group included



Community leaders enjoy a hayride, photo: Judy Miller; USFWS

local conservation partners, teachers, sportsmen, business owners, and college students.

The morning tour focused on demonstration activities including habitat management, environmental education, and bird banding. Refuge staff and volunteers explained the educational programs conducted each year. Then, local students demonstrated one of those activities, Animal Olympics. Attendees also saw bird

banding in action and participated in the release of a banded bird. Other topics included wildlife photography, waterfowl management, hunting opportunities, and the cooperative farming program. One of the last stops on the tour highlighted the number of fishing programs conducted each year by the refuge. During this stop, a young child's excitement was evident as he caught his first fish. The event concluded with a catered lunch provided by The Friends of Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge. ❖

Photo club visits Clarks River for monthly meeting

By Stacey Hayden, Clarks River NWR

The Marshall County Photography Club held their monthly meeting at Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge for Saturday, May 2. Some members of the group showed up at first light to start taking photos in "perfect" light. Later, as others arrived, Refuge Education Specialist Stacey Hayden gave a presentation on the history of Clarks River National Wildlife Refuge and its recreational opportunities.

A picnic lunch was temporarily interrupted by the appearance of a female wood duck and her chicks. As sandwiches were dropped, cameras were hoisted by people trying to get a photo of the fuzzy babies. A family of resident geese swam in the nearby fishing pond. Also present were numerous songbirds singing from perches among the trees and several shore and wading birds on mudflats within recently drained waterfowl impoundments.



A Canada goose and her goslings, photo: James Johnson

The photography group has several new members who are eager to learn. Several participants also are interested in volunteering at the refuge. The photo club has asked for another meeting later this summer to see the refuge's bird banding station "in the perfect light".

friends and volunteers continued...

Enhancing Shoreline Habitat at Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery NFH



Students plant marsh cordgrass seedlings, photo: USFWS

By Roman Crumpton, Bears Bluff

The Bears Bluff National Fish Hatchery partners with state, environmental, and educational organizations in South Carolina to increase aquatic habitat along South Carolina's estuarine coasts. This partnership, called Seeds to Shoreline, led to the successful production of marsh cordgrass plants from wild collected seeds in greenhouses.

In January 2015, Seeds to Shoreline distributed germinated cordgrass seeds to Bears Bluff, which were planted and grown for several months in greenhouses funded by the South Carolina Sea Grant Consortium. Recently, students from the Environmental Club at James B. Edwards Elementary School in Charleston visited the hatchery for an environmental education field trip. The students planted the greenhouse-grown advanced seedlings in the intertidal zone behind oyster reefs built from repurposed crab traps.

Edwards Elementary School Teacher Nancy Platt is dedicated to providing her students hands on experience in all aspects of preserving the environment. Her hard work and efforts recently garnered some much-deserved attention. Congressman Mark Sanford recognized her hard work and dedication to special needs children and the environment in South Carolina with a personal note to her. Additionally, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control recently named her teacher of the year. Bears Bluff is proud to partner with Mrs. Platt to make a memorable impact on her students and the environment. ❖

Follow the Leader

Don Imm, Georgia Ecological Services Field Office

By Tamara Johnson, Georgia Ecological Services Office

Don Imm has led the Georgia Ecological Services Field Office for just over a year, and he has guided the office in many big projects in that short amount of time. We asked him a few questions about his experience as the leader of the office.

What is your station's biggest project or challenge?

"Finding a way for conservation in light of the water needs of Georgia and multiple land uses of the wildlife areas. Also, meeting society's goals and expectations while keeping the needs of animals and plants that are our trust resources at the forefront."

What are the biggest assets at your station?

"Diversity in experience, and diversity in thought."

What qualities do the best leaders possess?

"They have compassion for their employees, because everyone needs to feel valued. They also show compassion for the public, so they always keep in mind the communities they serve. They focus on the mission of the agency, and envision conservation goals."

What advice would you give to someone who was seeking to become a leader?

"When you are in a difficult situation where there is high conflict and high tension between several disagreeing parties, and you get stuck, tell a story about how it personally relates to you, and then expand out the story to show how it applies to the greater issue. This injects humanity into the situation, and helps people come closer to an agreement."

What is a lesson you have learned after being in the Georgia Field Office for a year?

"Thinking strategically, and making every decision useful."

If you were a superhero, what would you want your superpower to be?

"Unflappable insight that is always correct, and always solution oriented."

Refuges welcomes new employees

By Kevin Lowry, Refuges, Atlanta, Georgia

Congratulations to all of our outstanding employees with their new positions here in the Southeast Region. For those who may be new to the Southeast, welcome. For those who were already here in the Southeast and transferred within our region, thank you. For those who are returning to the Southeast, welcome back home.

Clifford Berger is the new Deputy Project Leader at Carolina Sandhills National Wildlife Refuge (NWR) in McBee, South Carolina. Previously, he served as the Zone Fire Management Officer for the Service's Midwest Region. He started his new position on June 14. Clifford was a member of the Wrestling team at Oregon State. He also enjoys hunting and fishing. His wife is from South Africa.



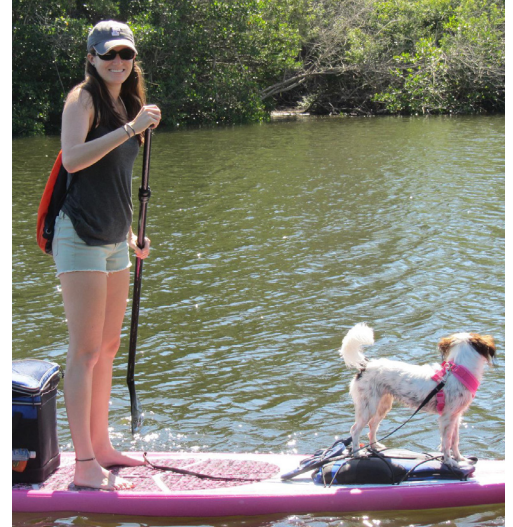
Clifford Berger, photo courtesy of Clifford Berger

Andrew M. Eastwick IV is the Invasive Species Biologist at the Arthur R. Marshall - Loxahatchee NWR in Florida. Previously, Andrew served as a Biological Science Technician at the Everglades Headwaters NWR Complex including Pelican Island NWR, Archie Carr NWR and Lake Wales Ridge NWR. Duties included habitat restoration, invasive species management, inventory and monitoring of resident and migratory birds, gopher tortoise, sea turtle, and southeastern beach mice surveys, as well as leading all routine refuge maintenance projects with the refuge complex. Andrew enjoys biking, hiking and birding, surfing, spending time with his fiancé and relaxing on the beach with a cold beverage.



Andrew M. Eastwick IV, photo: USFWS

Christine Trammell is the Wildlife Refuge Specialist at Hobe Sound NWR in Florida. She started her new position in March. Previously, she worked at the Everglades Headwaters Complex where she assisted with land and easement acquisition, administrative duties, and biology. A native Floridian, she is getting married next year in February. She enjoys paddle boarding.



Christine Trammell, photo courtesy of Christine Trammell

Holly T. Gaboriault will serve as Project Leader for the Savannah Coastal Complex in Georgia. Previously, Holly served as Refuge Supervisor for Alaska Region Refuges including Arctic, Alaska Maritime, Izembek, Kanuti, Yukon Delta, Yukon Flats NWRs. She reports for duty in September. Holly loves spending time with her dog, traveling with her husband, reading, working in her yard, hiking, and hopefully much more fishing and hunting than she has been able to do while in a Regional office!



Holly Gaboriault, photo: USFWS

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

new employees continued...

Martin Martinez is the Maintenance Worker at Savannah National Wildlife Refuge in Georgia. Previously, Martin served as a Maintenance Technician at an aircraft parts manufacturing plant, where he performed preventive and repair maintenance on production equipment, as well as on the buildings. Martin's hobbies include fishing, hunting and spending time with his wife and their two children in the outdoors.



Martin Martinez, photo: USFWS

Rebekah P. Martin will be the Deputy Refuge Supervisor for Area III at the Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia. Previously, Rebekah served as Deputy Refuge Manager for Eastern Virginia Rivers NWR consisting of Rappahannock River Valley, James River, Presquile, and Plum Tree Island NWRs in Virginia. Rebekah and her husband have two young children, a sweetheart of a labrador, and nine chickens that they are leaving with friends in Virginia. Rebekah loves to fish, waterski, and otherwise spend time on the water. She also enjoys camping and traveling. Recently, Rebekah took her first trip to the Grand Canyon.



Rebekah P. Martin, photo: USWS

Ernie Clarke is the Assistant Refuge Supervisor for Area II at the Regional Office in Atlanta, Georgia. Previously, Ernie served as the Science Program Coordinator of the Trinity River Restoration Program, a multi-agency river restoration effort in northern California. He worked on south Florida restoration projects for the US Army Corps of Engineers, and upland invasive species control and restoration at Audubon's Starr Ranch Sanctuary in California as well. Ernie enjoys surfing, jogging, reading, and coaching his kid's (Ernesto, 10 and Cecilia, 7) sports teams. Ernie's wife also is a biologist.



Ernie Clarke, photo: USFWS

Bill Miller is the Project Leader for Everglades Headwaters NWR Complex in Vero Beach, Florida. Previously, Bill served as Refuge Manager at Hobe Sound NWR in Florida. Bill loves spending time with his wife and two children. Much of their free time is spent fishing, camping, and being outdoors. Bill was born in Miami and is one of five family generations who have lived in Florida.



Bill Miller and family, photo courtesy of Bill Miller

Adam Bennetch is the Engineering Equipment Operator at Mackay Island National Wildlife Refuge at Knotts Island, North Carolina. Previously, Adam served as a permanent-seasonal Engineering Equipment Operator for the US Forest Service at the Monongahela National Forest in West Virginia. Adam was raised on a dairy farm in Pennsylvania. He is a Marine Veteran and enjoys fitness, as he has participated in races from 5k up to full marathons. Adam also enjoys fishing, camping, hiking, and kayaking, really anything outdoors oriented.



Adam Bennetch, photo: UFWS

What you didn't know

Dancer Kerri Heywood

By Elsie Davis, External Affairs



Kerri Heywood performs, photo: courtesy Kerri Heywood

Kerri Heywood, grant specialist with the Contracting and Grant Services Division in the Regional Office, is a dance instructor at Peace Lutheran Church in Decatur, Georgia. During the Regional Office's Multi-cultural Day, she choreographed and taught 20 employees a dance to do as a Flash Mob to the song "Happy" by Pharrell Williams.

Each Saturday during the school year, Kerri teaches students, aged five to young adult, dance styles like Horton Modern Dance, which shows strength and agility well suited for dances performed in church. She also teaches or invites professional dancers to teach various cultural dances. Kerri consults people from the many consulates in Georgia - - the Korean, Mexican, Liberian, and East Indian consulates, and even an Instructor from the Cherokee Nation in North Carolina.

"The instructors not only teach the cultural style of dance; they also loan us the cultural dress that is typically worn during the dance," says Kerri. "At Christmas, our dance performance theme was 'we are different culturally; but, we are alike in our faith.' "The students performed, Sudanese African, Cherokee Native American, East Indian and the Korean Knife dances."

Coming and Going

Welcome Kenneth Petrie

By Toni Westland, "Ding" Darling NWR



L to R: Kenneth Petrie and Jeremy Conrad, photo: Toni Westland

Kenneth Petrie started on April 6, 2015, as Administrative Support Assistant, a shared position with J.N. "Ding" Darling, Florida Panther, and Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuges. He will be based at "Ding" Darling, Sanibel Island. A native of Watertown, New York, Ken transferred to the Service from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers in Clewiston, Florida, where he worked as a records technician. He retired from the U.S. Air Force in May 2001, with 22 years of service.

"During my career with the Air Force, I worked in the administrative, heavy equipment, and aircraft maintenance field," Ken said. "I am happy to join the Fish and Wildlife Service. All of the employees, interns, and volunteers have been a great help. They have welcomed me with great attitudes and big smiles." ❖

Congratulations Jeremy Conrad

By Toni Westland, "Ding" Darling NWR

Former Wildlife Refuge Specialist Jeremy Conrad was recently promoted to the Lead Wildlife Biologist position held vacant two years ago due to budget cuts. Jeremy began as a contractor working on leatherback research at Sandy Point National Wildlife Refuge. In 2008, he was hired as a Term Invasive Species Biologist at Arthur R. Marshall Loxahatchee National Wildlife Refuge and continued his journey as a Term Biologist to "Ding" Darling National Wildlife Refuge in April

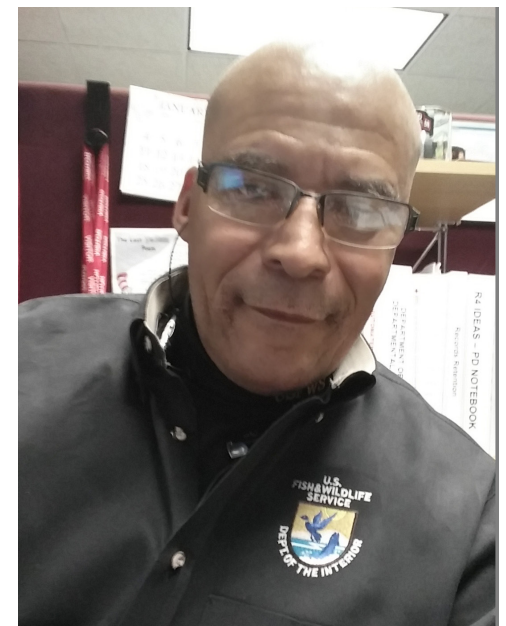
2010, assisting migratory bird, alligator, and small mammal surveys. Jeremy became the permanent Wildlife Refuge Specialist at "Ding" Darling in January 2013 to support all refuge management programs, including prescribed fire, and recently began a PhD program on mangrove ecology.

"Jeremy's diverse experience and excellent communication skills will serve him well in the leadership role for our Biology program," said Refuge Manager Paul Tritaik. ❖



Jeff Pitts retires

Jeff served as a Safety Technician in the Southeast Regional Office since 2007. He conducted Physical Security Assessments for field offices, taught First Aid and CPR, and helped provide a safe and secure workplace for Regional Office employees. Jeff also provided customer service on a daily basis to more than 100 visitors to the Regional Office. Prior to joining the Service, Jeff served in the Army for 22 years with 18 years in the Ranger Regiment. Now, he plans to do some traveling and to sleep later in the morning.



Jeff Pitts, photo: USFWS

Bee Photos from Lower Suwannee National Wildlife Refuge



Bee block, photo: Pam Darty

Bees and wasps lay their eggs in each tube according to their required size. Then, the mother bees plug the hole with leaves, mud, and nutritious goo



Woven basket cradle for baby bees, photo: Pam Darty

When Pam pulled the grass out of the bee blocks more than a year later this is what she found.

Fisheries reels in support, funding continued...

Fisheries FY 2015 Budget

Fisheries Sub-Activity	Allocation
National Fish Hatchery Operations	\$5,433,138
National Fish Hatchery System Maintenance & Equipment	\$2,699,893
Fish and Wildlife Coordination Office Maintenance & Equipment	\$57,602
Habitat Assessment and Restoration	\$2,090,711
Population Assessment and Cooperative Management	\$605,144
Aquatic Invasive Species	\$438,430
Corp of Engineers Reimbursable	\$3,379,653
Tennessee Valley Authority Reimbursable	\$906,191
	\$15,160,762